

CRITIQUE

ON THE LATE

FRENCH REVOLUTION.

To Mrs Elizabeth Sewall  
from the Author.—



# CRITIQUE

ON THE LATE

## FRENCH REVOLUTION,

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IN A

S P E E C H

DELIVERED AT THE

SOCIETY FOR FREE DEBATE AT .....

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

SOME REMARKS ON SUCH SOCIETIES IN GENERAL,

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“ Frenchmen, you are free; you have obtained in three days  
“ what the English, formerly your rivals, now your admirers,  
“ have purchased by ages of civil war, and rivers of blood in the  
“ field and on the scaffold.”—*Preface to the History of the Revolution,*  
*by Two Friends of the Constitution.*

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L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR R. FAULDER, IN NEW BOND-STREET,

M.DCC.XCIII,

# CRITIQUE

ON THE

## FRANCIS REVOLUTION

BY

THE

SOCIETY FOR FREE DEBATE AT

THE

SOME REMARKS ON THE SOCIETY IN GENERAL



THE SOCIETY FOR FREE DEBATE, AND THE  
FRANCIS REVOLUTION, HAVE COME TO THE  
CONCLUSION, THAT THE SOCIETY FOR  
FREE DEBATE, AND THE FRANCIS  
REVOLUTION, ARE THE ONLY TWO  
SOCIETIES, WHICH ARE WORTHY  
OF THE NAME OF A SOCIETY.

LONDON:

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M.DCCC.LXIII.



( 4 )

Of one or other of these numbers to  
cities whose privileges are to great and  
where admission is to easy, I was told that  
since an habitual frequenter. To a degree  
by protection very strong arguments are  
not requisite to secure his attendance, and  
entertainment is the object of public, and  
the propriety of a question, the propriety of  
a new project, or the claims of former  
precedence, were repeatedly mentioned in  
the course of the discussion.

**A**MONGST the amusements till lately  
peculiar to this country, and whose  
utility or disadvantage has been often the  
subject of discussion, are those disputing  
clubs, which, originating on trifles, have gra-  
dually risen to a height, and assumed a form  
which, if not yet of importance enough to  
merit the attention of the Legislature, de-  
mand at least the observation of every active  
citizen who is a friend to the welfare of his  
country.

**B**

**Of**

Of one or other of these numerous societies whose privileges are so great, and where admission is so easy, I was some years since an habitual frequenter. To a loungee by profession very strong allurements are not requisite to secure his attendance, where entertainment is the object of pursuit, and the popularity of a question, the promise of a new speaker, or the charms of female eloquence, were repeatedly successful in filling the hall, and replenishing the purse of the president.

Yet, whatever may be the partiality which men of the first talents and information have expressed for this sort of entertainment, it may be fairly doubted, whether any man but moderately distinguished for either was ever long an assiduous attendant on any of these schools of rhetoric: whatever has but little else than novelty to recommend, must soon become insipid; and  
in

in these gymnasia of politics and religion, the combatants are in general so ill-equipped and qualified for the parts they undertake, that one has more to smile at their unskilfulness, than to admire at their address.

Of this the cause is evident enough. In a country where bashfulness is one of the characteristics of its natives, to depend on the voluntary exertions of the crowd, would be the height of folly in those pecuniarily interested in the scene: orators must therefore be engaged like the mourners of the East, for hire, to supply the defect of zeal or ability in the legitimate attendants; to commence the (to them) uninteresting debate, support it when flagging, and enable it by their efforts to linger out the stipulated hours.

Were indeed these mercenary squabblers men of eminent parts and erudition, and were they, like some of our foremost pleaders

at the bar, animated with the interests of their client, there would be little to regret in the exchange; but a heavy rent, an uncertain and often scanty audience, the expence of advertisements, and the necessity of so many actors as to conceal, where possible, the secret of having any actors at all—all conspire to preclude so advantageous a substitution; and a strong voice, a flippant tongue, and face of brass, are too often the accepted qualifications.

Yet, even under these circumstances, a stranger is not unfrequently surpris'd by an appearance of acuteness in the disputants, and readiness of reply, which would not discredit a more illustrious assembly: to adepts, however, this is but mere commonplace dexterity, that, scarcely varied in innumerable repetitions, ends at last in exciting as pointed sentiments of disgust, as it formerly did of pleasure.

With



With respect to the fortuitous speakers, they are of a still inferior kind. For a man of sense and education to rise before a promiscuous and uncandid multitude, ever on the watch for something weak or ridiculous to indulge a laugh at his expence, and, in the certainty of being bullied and brow-beat, to keep alive the contest, a stronger motive must be needful than to display the vanity of superior knowledge, or to instruct disciples so ungrateful: to decide therefore some silly wager, or gratify a drunken frolic, is the ordinary incentive of a new declaimer; the rest, with very few exceptions indeed, are a mass of ignorant mechanics, who, conceited of their own opinions, and who thinking perhaps well, but without skill, to arrange their ideas, get up with one or two ready-made sentences, which, however badly pronounced, serve to rouse

expectation : but their race is quickly at an end ; the fatal lines are no sooner rehearsed than their recollection forsakes them, their senses are bewildered, and, after humming and hawing, and coughing, and blundering and stumbling through five or six minutes of most outrageous and contradictory nonsense, they are at last compelled to sit down amidst the hoots and hisses and laughter of the mob.

Mirth luckily, and not information, is the usual object of research ; yet however excellent the jest, or ridiculous the buffoon, familiarity must inevitably annihilate their effect : here too that mixture of pity which insensibly steals upon us even for the guilty sufferer, operates far more powerfully for the errors of deluded ignorance, and, this sensation increasing in proportion as the other is diminished, the entertainment is gradually converted

converted to a torment, and the tedious minutes are consumed in painful listening, or still more painful sympathy.

From such causes I was obliged, like thousands more, to abandon an amusement that no longer continued to be one, and, having once forsaken these clamorous theatres, should probably never again re-enter them, but for sometimes the curiosity of my country friends, though always with a secret kind of horror and reluctance, prophetic of the future, from the remembrance of the past.

In my last visit, notwithstanding, I was agreeably disappointed, and could be almost content to renew my penance, did there remain a less distant hope of sometimes partaking a similar reward: it was one of those numerous questions resulting from the French revolution that have lately been agitated in our clubs; the debate had as usual

wandered widely from the point, and one of the most fluent of the hireling assistants had just pronounced a most flaming eulogium on the excellence of the new constitution, and the patriotism, wisdom, and steadiness of the new legislators of the Gallic empire. The harangue would just as well have suited, and perhaps had been already made use of in other enquiries: the orator, fatigued and hoarse with the violence of his exertions, was bowing with an air of self-satisfaction to the acclamations of the audience, the evening was drawing to a close, and the president was already beginning to loll upon his rostrum as the prelude to dividing the house, when a well dressed stranger, of the middle age, and pleasing physiognomy, rose from his seat as intentionally to be heard: the respect due to his appearance, the eagerness with which at such places they always embrace the offers  
of



of a new friend, the conviction perhaps that, after so much had been said, but little could remain to add, united in the mind of the president to call immediately for silence and attention. The auditors, prepossessed in his favour, were hardly less disposed to listen than their chief; and the stranger, whose situation on an upper form was peculiarly advantageous to his design, with a modest, but assured countenance, and a clear and sonorous voice, thus proceeded, after bowing gracefully to the chair—

The gentleman who spoke last, Mr. President, has expressed himself with so much clearness and perspicuity, and in a manner so congenial to the apparent sentiments of this respectable assembly, that one cannot wonder at the applauses he has received, nor would it be just to refuse him at least the praise of sincerity. From what sources he may have drawn his information are best  
 2 known

known to himself: I am however persuaded that an opportunity, by residence in *that* country, of enquiring upon the spot into the reality of those blessings on which he has so largely expatiated, or even a strict comparison of the facts authentically reported in *this*, are amongst the number. To reason and to declaim are modes with whose difference the youthful inexperience, and perhaps education of the gentleman, have hardly yet made him acquainted, or if they have, he has failed, in the impetuosity of his patriotism, to perceive that the first and not the second is the language to be practised here.

To follow the gentleman, and confute him through a series of general propositions, the bare repetition of which has occupied him during a rapid enunciation of five-and-twenty minutes, however easy and obvious might be each separate attempt, would be encroaching too long on your patience to  
engage

engage in at so late an hour: I shall confine therefore my animadversions to three or four, which, containing in effect much of the essence of the rest, will, I hope, tend in some degree to dissipate those pernicious effects too much to be apprehended in feeble minds, from such bold and uncontroverted assertions.

Amongst the encomiums lavished on the revolution and revolutionists of France, the most surprising are those which ascribe to them firmness, steady perseverance, and other qualities of the like nature; the expressions, nevertheless, again and again reiterated, are convincing proofs that the error is not in my own hearing. Through the whole of his harangue, the gentleman seems indeed to have treated the principal performers of the popular party, since the first calling together of the National Assembly, as the same set of individuals; nor is he perhaps aware that they have  
been

been repeatedly shifted since the commencement of the play: yet so various have been the measures and counsels at different periods adopted and forsaken since that memorable æra, as to render such extreme inconsistency in the same bosoms totally irreconcilable to nature. To reform the abuses of the finance was the principal purpose of the new Convention; to liquidate the enormous debt with which the country was overburthened, and place the public revenues on a footing more beneficial to the state, and less oppressive to the subject: had their operations been limited to this original design, there are not wanting very able politicians, as well as steady friends to the happiness of mankind, whose opinion would have applauded their moderation. This step, though but one of thousands which have followed, was all which at that time in prudence could be taken; the minds of men would have been  
thus



thus awakened to the necessity and the advantages of reform, and the stipulated re-  
summoning of the assembly at stated times  
would have afforded most ample opportu-  
nities for gradually retrenching the old, and  
preventing the introduction of new abuses.

But scarcely were they warm in their  
seats when a mighty catalogue of griev-  
ances, perfectly foreign to the business be-  
fore them, was laid on the table: in this the  
factious and the profligate found their ac-  
count, and urged with violence their im-  
mediate redress; the inexperienced, the be-  
nevolent, and the humane, were drawn  
into the snare, or hurried with the stream;  
the first intention of the meeting was for-  
gotten or laid aside, and the National As-  
sembly was changed from a council of states-  
men to a committee of relief.

Yet the first projectors of a general re-  
formation were not wild enough to look for  
freedom

freedom or happiness in the adoption of foreign usages and laws; to nations unused to the very name of juries, their advantages are utterly incomprehensible; nor would the cautious proceedings of our courts be less disgusting to a Turk, than the summary justice of a Cahdibe shocking to the feelings of a Briton: the first resolve then was, to restore things to an imaginary ancient state of simplicity and rectitude; the last sovereigns were then considered as having committed the only constitutional depredations on the rights of citizens and men; and the days of the good, the patriot King Henry were the theme of the popular ballads and declaimers of the Palais-Royal.

With a hero whose name and praise were in every mouth it was very natural to wish to be acquainted; and it was thus unfortunately discovered that France had never been in a state of perfect enjoyment, and that even  
under

under the reign of this favourite monarch, most flagrant abuses had continued to exist. When one reflects under what circumstances the first assembly was called together, and of what materials it was composed, it will not appear wonderful, if, to many of the senators themselves, such intelligence was an absolute discovery: in a moment the clamour was changed; the ancient constitution, such as it was, fell into immediate disrepute; and, from a view of our wealth and prosperity, together with the compliments that have been paid to our system by Montesquieu and other judicious writers of their own, the whole kingdom became eager and infatuated for the government and jurisprudence of the English.

The same fatality however accompanied this new project that had already attended on the old: the game and forest laws, the multiplicity and severity of fines and forfeitures,

feitures, the prerogatives of the courts, and the assessments of service according to the rank and situation of the persons rated, appeared to the new legislators so many most unjustifiable infringements of reason and the rights of man. To weigh the expediency as well as moral justice of a law, requires a most intimate knowledge of the causes that produce it; and so impossible is it to distinguish at a distance the obsolete from the current, that it will not be hazardous to assert, a full uncommented copy of their statutes would be useless towards determining the practical legal administration of a foreign empire. In perusing the former code of France, the humane mind shudders at the cruelty of condemning to the flames the unfortunate unmarried female, who, concealing her condition, is delivered of a still-born child; but we recover again on hearing that the punishment was almost never inflicted:

the



the frequency of infant murder at first rendered necessary the promulgation of a law that seemingly oversteps the bounds of equity; the difuse of the crime speedily permitted the relaxation of the penalty.

A similar instance occurs in our own country in the treatment of an outlaw. More than a century has now elapsed since the execution of any one whose life was not already forfeit by a previous condemnation; in other cases some flaw has always been discovered to reverse the formidable sentence, and leave the criminal to the chances of his trial; yet on such foundations as these has the rage of popular fury been excited, and the flame of persecution lighted up, against all who shared in the ancient government, or were favoured by the ancient system: what was formerly a title to respect, is now converted into a stigma of reproach, and under the pretence of retaliating mis-

C . . . . . ries

ries which never were inflicted, the most cruel insults, robberies and massacres have been committed by the blind, and justified by the profligate.

To pass so rapidly from admiration to contempt of the British constitution, is a convincing proof of the political incapacity of those who could so inconsiderately adopt a bad, or fastidiously neglect a good example, as well as of their rash volatility, on whom the gentleman has so liberally bestowed the epithets of steady and persevering: they have indeed persevered, but it has been in deviating from every path which judgment and experience could point out as salutary or pious; and if, after vainly endeavouring to erect a constitution altogether new, they have at length condescended to a now impracticable imitation, it must only be considered as the prelude to new extravagancies, each of them, to conjecture  
from

from the past, to end in increasing horrors, poverty, and distress; for the present, a premature attempt to conceal a despot in the masque of a dictator, has procured that unhappy country a short respite from the fangs of some bold and fortunate usurper, a conclusion as inevitable as merited.

I have hitherto, in reviewing the legislative administration of France during the last four years of pretended liberty, treated them as one uniformly organised body, animated by a single soul, because such has been the favourite idea entertained of them by those who, speaking of their movements, have only known them at a distance and by hearsay, and because such has been the manner in which it was treated by the gentleman who spoke last; but I have already observed, that the leaders, and the leaders may be fairly regarded as the essence of the whole, have been changed as frequently as the measures.

In referring to the debates of preceding years, one is surpris'd at finding the names of those who took part in them, so totally different from the prominent features of the present day. A most singular clause precluded indeed from a seat in the second assembly, all who, from having enjoyed one in the first, might be supposed to have attained some degree of skill, and experience in the difficult arts of legislation and government; this clause, however, extended not to the choice of the present convention, and many of the mutations alluded to were prior to the dissolution of the first assembly: of those distinguished characters who had been the means of originally consulting the people by the voice of their representatives, many seceded from their brethren, and retired to their estates on the earliest symptoms of deviation from their primitive design, and of that turbulence which they plainly foresaw



forefaw could lead but to anarchy and ruin; and a ftill greater number followed their example, and embraced a voluntary exile, when the violences at Verfailles, and the captive entry of the fovereign like a criminal into Paris, left no other alternative in remaining, than of fuffering the imputation of treason againft the prince or the people, whom they could now no longer, with any fhew of reafon, affect to confider as members of the fame body: yet thefe are the men now ftigmatized as poltroons and deferters of the public caufe, to whose memory a lefs infatuated nation would pay the choicelt tribute of her gratitude, and to whom, in this ferries of events, the characteristics of courage and perfeverance almoft peculiarly belong; fince, from their rank in life, with nothing to gain in the accomplifhment of their efforts, they difintereftedly flood forward in a moment of diftreff to fave their finking

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country,

country, nobly despised the threats and resisted the seductive offers of the court, and generously braved, in a then almost hopeless cause, the dangers of imprisonment, of confiscation, and of death.

Yet though, in admiring such virtue, we may regret the fate that attended it, we may perhaps, on maturer reflection, find reason to congratulate our feelings that it was not still more calamitous. In proportion as the right of freethinking in politics and religion was theoretically understood to be established on a firmer basis, the practice of it became more and more dangerous; and to dissent from the ruling axiom of the moment has regularly advanced through the various comparative stages of criminality, till the death itself of the offender is now thought an insufficient atonement for so enormous an offence.

Of the truth of this, many well known  
chiefs

chiefs in the different departments of the state have had very woful experience; nor is perhaps the murder of the state-prisoners by a banditti at Orleans, and by their own guards on the road to the capital, the last scene in this tragical story: but it is said that they were traitors, justly sacrificed by an injured and indignant people. That they were traitors to their king, and false to their engagements, is indeed but too melancholy a truth; that they yet felt themselves incapable of keeping pace with the sanguinary schemes adopted by the new cabal, I can easily believe; and that they should attempt to escape with their booty from a country where it was no longer safe for them to remain, is a movement too natural to be questioned:—but that they had carried on a correspondence with the emigrants, and plotted to restore the ancient government, is a tale too absurd to be credited; for what services,

by men no longer in office, could expiate the crimes committed in the zenith of their power? or, in the case of Barnave, what quarter could be expected from the pride and vengeance of insulted princes by a miserable attorney? <sup>the</sup> Accusation notwithstanding was easy, and their execution, previous to trial, effectually cut off the means of justification.

To sum up in a few words the career of the more distinguished revolutionists, Mirabeau is the only one that quitted the scene with applause. What might have been the fortune and conduct of that extraordinary man, had fate permitted him a longer existence, it is now impossible to decide; eloquent and prudent, he at once indulged in his harangues the licentious passions of the crowd, and moderated in action the violence of his colleagues. With a head to form the most intricate, and a heart to execute the boldest



boldest counsels, how far might not such ambition have aspired, and such talents have succeeded? Perhaps, a second Monk, he might have chosen to found his greatness on the re-establishment of order, and the restoration of his monarch; or, seduced by the pageants of royalty, have left in a second Cromwell, for posterity to execrate the crimes, and admire the abilities of the daring usurper.

Yet whatever were the secret intentions of his bosom, his death was sincerely regretted by his party, and even by the less impassioned of the rival faction, as a general misfortune; nor have his last prophetic words since ceased a single moment from seeing their accomplishment: from that period the nation has been rapidly advancing to its ruin; <sup>nor</sup> ~~and~~ on the flight and subsequent humiliation of the king, was any exclamation more common than, Ah! this would not  
have

have been the case had Mirabeau been yet alive !

In mentioning the king's flight, I am well aware that the gentleman to whom I have so often alluded, will feel a momentary triumph, and ask whether then was not an instance of steadiness in the National Assembly ? My answer will be the last which on this head I shall trouble you to listen to: Had the gentleman been at Paris, he would have known that, from the intelligence of the evasion till the news of the recapture, the whole assembly was in the utmost consternation, and that their decrees were the result not of firmness but of despair, for that to retreat collectively or separately was no longer within their power; that they were considered as so many pledges of their fidelity to the cause; that the avenues of the metropolis were strictly guarded; and that the life of every deputy who had attempted

to pass the barriers, would in all probability have paid the immediate forfeit of his cowardice or temerity.

Having now discussed the steadiness and intrepidity, I shall next proceed to investigate the wisdom of these mighty lawgivers: To follow them through myriads of acts which rose from their legislative elaboratory like sparks from a furnace, would be engaging in a labour more arduous than all those of Hercules together, and, as I have already remarked, be attended, from the distance of time and place, with a very unsatisfactory decision: I shall therefore, Mr. President, confine myself to some general propositions obvious to every capacity, and resting on principles that remain the same through every, <sup>age</sup> and in every corner of the globe; such are doubtless the enquiries relative to the establishment of the clergy, the regulation

tion of the bar, and the abolition of titles, arms, and liveries.

In the old ecclesiastical system of France, there was indisputably abundant matter for reform: the multitudes of religious of both sexes, restrained by vows from the performance of their duties to society, were an evil which in sound policy demanded an immediate remedy, and which it is only wonderful had been permitted to subsist so long: the sinecure benefices too, which, no longer bestowed to reward the virtues, talents, and industry of the clergy, were applied to support the extravagance of needy and dissipated courtiers, had been long the subject of scandal and complaint; and though in this latter class humanity might have suggested the lapse and gradual suppression of the dignities, in the former even superstition herself has hardly room to murmur at  
the



the alternative offered to her votaries. To the voluntary sons of sorrow, who might choose to persist in the observance of their vows, whose bodies were corroded by penance, and emaciated by fasting, the simple change of residence could be but a small additional severity, to be counted amongst the mortifications in this life, which were to secure them a superior portion in the next. Nor could any objection justly lie against the augmented number in the new societies: the solitude and silence of the cell would be in these equally inviolate; the meals in religious houses are, or should be, passed in solemn attention to select readings by some one of the brotherhood for the instruction of the rest; and the hood or the sleeve are ready resources against wanderings at public prayer. To such, notwithstanding, as for private reasons were unwilling to enter these new retreats, a pension was provided in all respects sufficient

sufficient to procure the necessaries of the world to those who had renounced its luxuries : if there were any audacious enough to plead that these renunciations were merely formal, their imposture and perjury were but mildly punished in the disappointment of their views.

I have paid these compliments, Mr. President, to the conduct of the assembly in the suppression of the monastic orders, because I sincerely feel that they are merited, and because I wish gentlemen to be aware that I have not blindly adopted one side of an important question, to the exclusion of reason on the other; in this they have certainly acted with a liberality that does them honour: would to Heaven they had been equally scrupulous and prudent in their treatment of the episcopal and parochial clergy !

To support a state, by cementing its orders,

ders, confirming its laws, and enforcing obedience to its government, it has been agreed that religion is necessary, by all politicians, whether sacred or profane, pious or atheistical, from Moses to Machiavel; nor is there any need to enlarge on the necessity of ministers to keep alive the influence of religion. What indeed should be the hire of such service, is a point not so easy to determine, and the ambiguous precept has, according to the times and temper of mankind, been variously made use of to reduce the so substantiated claim to a scanty subsistence, or swell it to enormous wealth. In the first promulgation of Christianity, the preachers, inspired by the example of their great Prototype, and regaled perhaps in visions with a foretaste of those joys that would afterwards reward their merit, solicited no other present recompense than the consciousness of performing their duty, and met even death,

death, in all its horrors, not only with indifference, but pleasure; but the age of inspiration is at an end, and while the same exertions are requisite, it would be madness to look for the zeal of the first in the indifference of the eighteenth century.

It would seem, notwithstanding, from a review of the new ecclesiastical constitution, that such, or more than such enthusiasm was expected by those who composed it; in the present day, when a spontaneous flow of languages, the power of working miracles, and the gift of prophecy, are no longer amongst the incidents of life, a long, laborious and expensive education is necessary to form the pastor for the duties of his charge. Were the French clergy, like the Levites among the Jews, or the Bramins of the East, a distinct race, inheriting from sire to son in regular progression the prerogatives of the priesthood, the cause might  
not



not be hopeless, the idea of propriety might supply the want of encouragement; and the struggle be continued, in the hope that posterity, in the next revolution of events, would reap the advantage of their present sufferings: but, in the actual disposition of things, what parent, in circumstances to support his child through the previous studies, will choose for him a profession in which every worldly passion, and almost every innocent desire, must be in a perpetual state of mortification and self-denial, where his hours must be divided between the cloister and the sick-bed, and where the reward for such uninviting toil may possibly equal the competence to be acquired by manual labour?

It will perhaps be remarked, that I have been silent on the bishopricks; but they are too few in number, and too insignificant in value, to stimulate the humblest ambition in the original destination of a youth; nor can

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they,

they, in the gift of the people, operate afterwards but as so many incentives to cabal: when proportioned to the worth of the prize in the eyes of the candidates, all the arts of affection, flattery and bribery, will be called into action, to the disgrace of order, decency, and religion.

I am not ignorant that, under the old government, the wealthier dignities of the church were chiefly reserved for the sons of the nobility who embraced an ecclesiastical life, and that yet the inferior and plebeian clergy were distinguished for their learning and abilities: this, however, was owing to two causes which now no longer operate. As no legal disqualification existed for attaining the foremost honours of the church, and as examples of such success were occasionally met with, each individual, with the self-partiality natural to man, might consider himself as likely to arrive at these distinctions,

tions, provided his own efforts were not wanting to merit such pre-eminence: it must be remembered also, that the parochial clergy were usually recruited from the monasteries; that the libraries of these houses were in general copiously furnished; and that their discipline was peculiarly favourable to study, the only refuge of the active mind from the irksomeness of solitude and confinement.

How far the eleemosynary colleges, projected as nurseries for the rising generation, may answer the intended purpose, time only can determine: the narrow discipline of a school is however but ill calculated to produce the intended unprejudiced philosopher; when the years of childhood are past, no studies are less productive than those which are limited to rule, and no test of ability is less certain than that of examination.

But, to give weight to precept, it is requi-

site that the teacher should be not merely  
 sensible and learned, he should also be re-  
 spectable: nor is respect the invariable  
 attendant even of superior virtue; the  
 weakness and prejudices of mankind  
 have, in every age, attached but too much  
 consideration to the glare of riches; and  
 these prejudices, as it is the part of  
 wisdom to condemn, it is of policy to con-  
 sult. On the man who is much superior  
 in fortune to ourselves, and even on him  
 who may be so, we are apt to look with pe-  
 culiar complacency: his observations and  
 remarks, either because we listen to them  
 more attentively, or hear them with less  
 passion, appear to contain more sterling  
 sense than we are accustomed to discover in  
 our familiars; his jests and witticisms have a  
 strength and neatness which, in inferiors,  
 might be perchance mistaken for folly and im-  
 pertinence; and if he condescends to chide,

his



his reproof seems to convey rather a favour than an insult.

It is true, indeed, that in every age there have been men who, by the reputation of sanctity alone, have obtained the most unlimited authority wherever their attentions were addressed; but this has been always the effect of that real or supposed indifference to wealth and greatness, which elevates beyond the possession; and to look for such success from involuntary poverty, is but to expose our ignorance of what passes in our own hearts. What the clergy of France will be a century hence, may be seen in what that of Russia is at present; poor, illiterate, and immoral, their lives are spent in a series of stratagems to impose on the credulity of their flock, and in a course of low debaucheries, scandalous to the character they bear, and the religion they profess; to mistake the term "library" for the appel-

lation of a liquor closet—this is the learning; to be found drunk and rolling in the streets—these are the manners of a Russian priest.

Having thus considered, as fully as the present circumstances will permit, the actual and probably future state of the new French church, I shall proceed to make a few observations on the changes which have taken place in the administration of justice.

Of all the branches of government, there is none in which grievances are more sensibly felt than in this, whether from the iniquity of the laws themselves, or the conduct of those who dispense them: one tyrannical decree carries more oppression in its consequences, and is productive of more cruelty among a people, than perhaps all the personal enormities together of the most flagrant tyrant of antiquity; and one corrupt magistrate is, within the circle of his influence,

ence, a severer scourge than all the taxes which the avarice of princes can impose, or the service their ambition can exact: the first is the tyrant divided, subdivided, and multiplied, wherever a victim can be found whereon to satiate his rage, and striking at the same time in a thousand different places, with all those instruments which malice or interest, or the better motive of respect for the laws combine to create for him; the second is a cruel enemy, ill-disguised in the cloak <sup>of</sup> a protector, the knowledge of whose designs but aggravates the horror of becoming his prey, since we are at once enabled to see and compelled to suffer, without the hope to elude or the right to retaliate the blow.

In the old system, under both these heads, as has already been remarked in relation to the church, there was ample room for amendment; with respect however to the

laws, they must, for the reasons specified before, be left for the investigation of those who are better qualified for the task, and we must confine ourselves, both in what preceded and followed the revolution, to some slight animadversions on the constitution of the courts, and the character of the judges.

Of these there were various kinds, proportioned, as with us, to the nature and importance of the cause, and with appeals from the inferior to the higher, where the punishment of a criminal exceeded a certain severity, or the property in litigation a certain value.

Amongst the abuses in the higher courts, was that which arose during the civil wars which distracted the kingdom in the reigns of Charles the Ninth, and his successors the two Henries: to replenish the exchequer, exhausted by such long calamities, every expedient seemed lawful that spared the then generation,



generation, who had already suffered so much; and the sale of the higher charges in the law, even to the rendering them alienable and hereditary, was conceived and adopted as one of the most fertile resources. To enter at length into the evils of such a plan will hardly be necessary, they are too obvious to require even mention; it will be enough to remark, with a celebrated Roman Emperor, that whatever is bought will be sold again: and that such was the opinion commonly entertained of the parliaments of France, is evidenced by the open sarcasms of Moliere, and other writers of comedy and romance.

With respect to the inferior judges, they were often subject to the heavy imputations of prejudice, ignorance, and corruption. To a magistrate who decides but in a narrow district, of which his own residence is the centre, it must be extremely difficult to se-  
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cure his bosom from the partialities occasioned by report, or neighbourhood, or friendship; and the cause will be often adjudged before the commencement of the trial. The information of the student was much more frequently derived from reading than from practical observation; and, with an income that depended on the fees of office more than on the regular provision of the state, the temptation was great to delay the progress, in order to augment the expences of litigation, and even to profit by the liberality of claimants in a doubtful suit.

In the various essential parts of the British constitution, those which have received the loudest encomiums from judicious foreigners, are the inestimable privilege of our petty jury, and advantage of our circuit courts: by the first, emphatically termed the palladium of our liberty, we are protected  
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from the schemes of private malice, and the encroachments of royal tyranny; and, by the second, we obtain a more impartial and intelligent dispensation of the laws, than can be met with in any other country upon earth. The princely fortune of an English judge places him above the very suspicion of a bribe; and the incapability to preside in civil cases, in whatever county is marked either by his residence or estate, more effectually precludes, than any other precaution, the chance of partiality.

By the new constitution of France, the salary of a magistrate, competent to decide in all causes civil and criminal, is fixed at the paltry sum of eighteen hundred livres, or seventy-five pounds sterling per annum; with the exception of the metropolis alone, where the increased expenditure of life is calculated at 4000 livres, or one hundred and sixty-six pounds thirteen shillings and four-pence.

pence. Under such appointments as these, can any man imagine for a moment that the old imputation of bribery is likely to be removed? On the contrary, is it not rather likely to be increased? since the splendour of the court is now no longer proportioned to the importance of the cause; since the magistrate, decorated with a title his finances are so ill calculated to support, is tempted at once by his pride and his necessities to sacrifice his honour to his interest; and since, in the humiliation of his order, he may cover to himself the magnitude of his crime in the notions of retaliation and revenge.

With respect to prejudices it is sufficient to remark, that they are still stationary as before; nor, after what has been said under the article of the church, is there much occasion to enlarge on the insufficiency of such emoluments to provoke an emulation to excel in candidates for an office which does  
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not even reward the labour of the actual possessor.

It may be suggested from the elections which have hitherto occurred, that the number and respectability of the candidates afford a more favourable hope: this omen, however, is fallacious; these candidates were formed under the ancient system, when the prize to be contended for was better worthy their ambition. In the disappointment of their views, they catch indeed at whatever may alleviate their fall; but the present generation will quickly pass away, and the next will estimate the venture by the profit it is likely to produce.

Yet, slender and inadequate to the trust as is the salary of each single magistrate, the aggregate rises to an incredible amount. In England are twelve judges, whose united salaries hardly exceed the moderate sum of thirty-five thousand pounds, and from this  
again

again a fifth must be deducted for the land-tax. In France, where crimes are less frequent, and less various, a double allowance of magistrates on a similar plan would be more than sufficient, and the difference of specie permit a still further deduction in the nominal value of their appointments: by the new arrangement, notwithstanding, hardly less than two hundred thousand pounds are paid to judges only, divided by fives and sixes into almost six hundred tribunals; whilst, to balance the other charges of English jurisprudence, each tribunal has an officer denominated at the institution the King's advocate, now perhaps the Nation's, at the same ratio as a judge, with whom he possesses the rights of investigation and opinion, without that of the vote, and whose annual total is more than forty thousand pounds: at a third part of this sum must be reckoned the standing disbursement to the secretaries,

secretaries, the smallness of whose pittance is made up by fees; and if the salary of the public accuser is not yet expressed, his necessary attendance on all public days must be recompensed by another very heavy national burthen.

Such are a few particulars of that part of the new civil administration of France which answers to our royal courts, and which its promulgators have boldly published as a masterpiece of human wit. Whether any of this respectable assembly would choose, without some little farther amendment, to adopt it as our own, is best known to themselves; I will, however, hazard a surmise, that they would not change for the better. That there is sometimes partiality in our courts, may be true, since frailty is the lot of man. There is also sometimes the remark of an old woman on the bench; but the old woman on an English bench, would be the oracle

oracle of any other : fifty years of reading, and more extensive practical observation than can be met with in any other country, though bestowed but on a moderate genius, must ensure a fund of judgment and penetration, which the young man, however favoured by the gifts of nature, will find it much easier to envy than to excel : things appear great or little, mean or magnificent, in relation to the objects which surround them ; the stars that are first faintly distinguished in the twilight, gradually assume a lustre as their smaller or less splendid brethren emerge upon the sight ; and the sun itself would be obscure in a circle of brighter luminaries.

I cannot dismiss this article without advert-  
 ing to a late decree, with which none of  
 you can be unacquainted, as well from its  
 general notoriety, as because the gentleman  
 whom I have the honour of following,  
 thought proper to pay it the most unbound-  
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ed compliments, as replete with the spirit of liberty and justice, and a memorable triumph over ancient prejudice. By a decree of the primitive assembly, it was ordered that every candidate for the magistracy should be qualified in study and practical experience, according to certain rules there specifically described; and by another decree, then regarded as the most solemn and consequential during their whole duration, it was enacted, that no constitutional article should be capable of change, by any authority whatever, during a given term of years:—yet one of the first decrees of the present convention has been to reverse this important clause, to declare the simple rank of citizen sufficient qualification for the dignity of judge; and, as if the safety or happiness of the republic were in danger from the error, and to fix the strongest censure on the conduct of their predecessors, to or-

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der the immediate displacement of the then magistrates, and a fresh election, conformably to the tenour of the new discoveries in the volume of the Rights of Man—a volume whose chapters, like those of the Koran, are ever ready to descend to indulge the caprice or justify the enormities of the day. This however conveys at least one useful lesson; it points out the probable continuance of a fabric whose foundations are so easily destroyed.

The first use and principle of government is to protect the weak from the violence of the strong, and unsuspecting simplicity from the depredations of dishonest cunning: to prohibit the counterfeit of signatures and persons; the obligation of using certain known and accustomed weights and measures, and the penalties of adulteration, are all so many direct and positive infringements of the primary and natural rights of man, in

the disposition of himself and his property: yet, it may be fairly questioned, if the most furious partisan of universal freedom would solicit the repeal of such valuable laws. A similar regard to equity and the happiness of mankind has extended, through all civilized countries, these necessary precautions to a variety of other points; and if a prohibition to exercise, without a previous apprenticeship, those trades whose commodities are open to the meanest judgment, may seem to surpass the bounds of reason, no one can surely regret that the lives and more important interests of men are guarded by all the barriers ingenuity can devise against the secret attacks of wily and remorseless villainy.

Were indeed the sacred characters of pilot and physician at the mercy of all who thought proper to assume them, humanity must shudder to anticipate the consequence;

the evils, notwithstanding, of such licence would be comparatively trivial with those of incapacity or corruption in a judge: the employment of the first is optional, and in proportion as the chances of imposture were increased, the care to avoid it would be augmented also; but the claim of the magistrate is positive, and, however low our opinion of his morals and understanding, our cause must be submitted to his decision, and our dearest interests, our life itself perhaps, depend on his award. In the new decree, therefore, they have committed a most serious attack on the very rights they were ignorantly intending to advance; and, with equal reason in the scheme, and less mischief in the trial, might a company of such qualified taylors be authorized to demand the custom, and mangle the clothes of their fellow-citizens: to be equal to the duties of the office in request is no more than the law  
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of reason, and to become so was already in every body's power.

It remains now, Mr. President, only to add a few words on the abolition of titles, arms, and liveries; a measure the more absurd, as, notwithstanding the peals of approbation with which it has been received, it was as little founded on expediency as right.

In the policy of former times, it was imagined that the wealth of nations consisted in the heaps of gold treasured ineffectively in the coffers of the rich. Experience has, however, demonstrated, that money is only useful in circulation; and that all those sumptuary laws which restricted the expence of the individual in articles furnishable by the country, were so many unjust and impolitic obstructions to the industry, commerce, and consequent population of the state. Under this conviction,

a wise government is eager to promote, by every possible encouragement, the invention and improvement of those arts and manufactures which, by applying to the real or imaginary wants of mankind, extort from their pride or vanity, or indolence, what their avarice could withhold from the strongest appeals of duty or humanity.

But of all the incentives to expence, to support the dignity of rank is perhaps the most powerful: with men whose fortunes, in their own and the estimate of the world, are but proportioned to their titles, it effectually precludes the possibility of hoarding; and even in those whose revenues are more ample, an ambition to be distinguished is frequently of equal use. In the commonest public vehicles, at the meanest ordinaries, we meet with men who, with all the affluence of nobility, but without the rank, are thus content, by ill-served meals and uncomfortable

fortable travelling, to add something to a heap, of which they hope not the enjoyment ; and please themselves with the idea of thus avoiding a charge, the ten-fold of which, but with the added bauble of a title, they would be eager to incur.

We are now in the city, and the majority of us are probably of its members : I shall, therefore, venture to illustrate the proposition by the example of a late chief magistrate, with whose history many of you cannot fail to be acquainted. Whilst undistinguished from the crowd of fellow-citizens, his house, and dress, and table, were all regulated by the most parsimonious frugality: this last, indeed, was often no other than a joint-stool, where the luxury of table-linen was unknown, and the viands suited to the simplicity of the board. His property was, however, notorious: the expectation of a fine, rather than the thought of his executing

the office, procured him a nomination to the shrievalty, and his conduct in it was rewarded by the gown of an alderman. But in these new dignities the œconomy of his household underwent a total mutation : he was no longer the sordid mechanic, blindly labouring for the benefit of others; he was now studious only to enjoy, in an honourable old age, the product of his former toils ; and his mayoralty, which he did not long survive, may be ranked among the most eminent of late years for liberality and splendour.

Nor are arms and liveries distinctions that operate less potently in disposing their owners to expence : for an equipage to be known wherever it is seen, is sufficient inducement to furnish it in such a style as may not discredit the proprietor; and the excellence of the horses, the elegance of the carriage, and the gaudiness of the servants, though intended



tended to gratify but the vanity of one, contribute, through the care of Providence, to the wealth and subsistence of many employed in the various branches of the work: nor does the advantage end with these—the expectations excited by the first appearance must be gratified by subsequent disbursement. Thus every tax on vanity acts but as the prelude and incentive to a heavier; and the voluntary burthen is supported with pleasure, since it adds to the importance of the bearer.

Yet, whatever may have been the imprudence of a decree that thus obstructed the circulation of wealth in its return from the higher to the lower orders of society, and left, in an instant, destitute of employment and support some myriads of industrious artificers, its injustice was at least equal to its folly. In saying this, it is far from my intention to defend those oppressive privileges

leges which had been granted to, or usurped by the nobility, and whose exercise, incompatible with the general rights of nature and the happiness of mankind, had been long so justly complained of: in the suppression of these every friend to humanity must rejoice; but, to root up the flower with the weed, was surely the part of an unskilful gardener.

That the Sovereign, by the ancient fundamental constitution of France, possessed the right in common with the other Sovereigns of Europe, of advancing to the honours of the kingdom, not only such as might be worthy, but whomsoever he should choose, is an axiom that not one of the many thousand writers who have drawn a pen in the cause of revolutions has dared to controvert. In the origin of modern titles, the marquis, the count, the viscount, were so many viceroys or governors of provinces  
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and cities, or possessing some considerable civil or military post of the highest consequence in the state: but, in the meaning of the present day, nothing could be more harmless than these splendid surnames; they implied neither wealth nor authority, and were assumable in all their varieties according to the taste or vanity of those previously promoted by the monarch to the rank of nobles. In stripping therefore the nobility of those pretended privileges which militated against the common freedom of the nation, and which had only been cajoled or extorted from the weakness or pusillanimity of those who possessed not the right of granting, that body might have been left, without danger, in quiet possession of a dignity which was as much the inheritance of their fathers as the estates that were transmitted with it.

To look back to an ideal origin of society has been the favourite maxim of such as  
support

support the democratic cause, and they affect to triumph in the discovery of a moment when all mankind were on a level. I shall not stop to enquire whether such naked, destitute individuals (for such they are confessed to have been), were happier, or likely to be so, than the present generation: but distinction of ranks having once arisen in the world, and the right to create them being vested, by common and constitutional consent, in the Sovereign of each respective country, whatever may be the pretended right of the people to revoke at will their contract with their king, the consequences of such contract, previous to its revocation, can no longer be cancelled but by the most forcible and open violation of the laws of equity, and the ruin of that confidence in engagements which should subsist between man and man, for the welfare of society. In reducing the Monarch, therefore, to the condition



condition of a factor, his engagements during the continuance of his commission, like those of other factors, should be all religiously fulfilled; nor is it any thing less than fraud to plead in refusal, that the agent, in keeping within the commission, has gone beyond the intention of his principals. But the assembly have not even stopped here: these vain distinctions were frequently the price of public services, that, without their intervention, must have been paid for in more solid coin; and not a few were purchased by wealthy plebeians for specific sums of money. Yet, neither in the annihilation of these rewards have those services been otherwise repaid; nor, though whatever has been received by the agent has by every human law been received by the principal, have they had sufficient honesty to return the money of the disappointed purchasers: thus collectively committing, under the pre-

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text of patriotism, and with the plaudits of the vulgar, a crime which individually would add to the infamy of the most infamous of mankind.

Yet, however the prejudices of the crowd might be in some degree justified against a rank the abuse of which had been the frequent cause of injustice and oppression, and were the more natural in proportion as the hope of attaining it themselves was more remote, the distinction of arms and armorial-bearings might have been exempt from the attacks of spleen and envy, since the possession of these was as general as insignificant; being restricted to no order, and conveying no privilege, nor even meaning, except that of being peculiar, like a name to the family by which they were born. Originating in the necessity of thus distinguishing a friend from an enemy, whose features in battle were alike buried in the uniformity of armour,

mour, they had been continued from habit, and multiplied by caprice, when the cause to which they owed their existence was no more. If, however, they no longer contributed to the safety of their owners, they were innocently useful in gratifying their vanity: on the door of a carriage at the entrance of an avenue, they modestly informed the gazer whose equipage glittered in the circle, whose mansion decorated the scene; and such their chiefest use was an advantage as much the reward of wealth obtained by industry, as descended by inheritance.

In the scale of benefits, indeed, the balance rather preponderated for the poor: the honourable augmentations deserved by military prowess, or granted by royal partiality, were lost amongst the plumes, and swords, and lions of the peasant and mechanic; but ambitious poverty could never forget, or fail to publish wherever a hearer could

could be found to listen to the tale, the marriage which quartered, perhaps five hundred years before, the ducal crown with the trowel or the plough-share.

Where then was the necessity, or where, with greater reason may be asked, was the right to confiscate the property of arms? Such property is, 'tis true, ideal, and its enjoyment the result of education; but as well might a mob or a cabal rob us at once of all those comforts and conveniencies, in their head-strong arbitration, not intrinsically necessary to happiness. If our feelings cease to be consulted, how few, how very few things indeed are needful for existence!

Equally unjustifiable and absurd was the abolition of liveries: the servant in the coat of his master, with the liberty to throw it off at will, is certainly for that rather less than more the slave of his caprice, since the  
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risque of wasting his clothes, to secure a more deserving successor, must operate to the pardon of many neglects and disobediences, that would otherwise be punished with his discharge.

In one word, it might perhaps have been more ridiculous, but it had been also more just, more consistent with the pretended rights of man, and principles of action, to have at once declared the nation noble to its meanest individual, and left these gaudy pageants of birth and fortune to the mercy of all who would assume them.

Such are a few of the numberless animadversions to which the decrees of the National Assembly have been justly liable; the whole of their administration can be viewed by the informed and feeling mind, but with horror and regret: in less than four years they have reduced a flourishing kingdom to the extremes of poverty and distress, diffi-

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pated its treasures, ruined its credit, and deluged it with blood. In the first sketch of operations, it was fondly thought, that, to destroy and rebuild the constitution of a mighty empire, was the easy employment of a few months; and that the happiness of the people, advancing with the progress of the work, would be perfect in its completion. An incessant, tumultuary, and ill-digested labour of two years has however demonstrated the mistake; and the solemn ratification of the *finished* code has left, as appears even in the conduct of the lawgivers themselves, still much to do, and much to be undone. Nor have the promised effects been calculated better: the people are still burthened by oppressive taxes, still harassed by vexatious forms; the tyranny of the nobles is transferred to the municipalities; and the conversion of the specie into paper, the depression of its value, and perpetual variation

according

according to the chances of being realized or annihilated, have given such a shock to commerce, agriculture, and industry, as will long be felt in that unhappy country.

With what reason too they boasted, in the first moments of success, of having in an instant effected a revolution which cost us so many years of obstinate and sanguinary civil war, may now be tolerably conceived. The popular murder of a few officers of the finance, grown fat, as 'twas said, by the pillage of their country, and the massacre of a few guards in the execution of their duty, were indeed, in the estimation of the new patrons to liberty and order, but a trifle too natural for wonder, too contemptible for regard: the conflict, however, at Nancy, between the old and the new troops, wherein some hundreds fell on both sides, seemed to indicate that the contest was not yet decided, and the prognostic has been amply justified.

In the battle and subsequent massacre of the tenth of August above five thousand are computed to have perished, and half as many more in the beginning of September; yet these are far from the total of the victims that have been sacrificed—a total which, whilst it almost rivals in number that of the slain in our civil conflicts of the last century, by far exceeds it in atrocity and horror. In those, the carnage was confined to such as by voluntary enlistment were consequently exposed to the dangers of the field; but the husbandman was protected in his farm, and the merchant in his commerce:—in these, neither age, nor sex, nor profession, is exempted from outrage and from death; the very sanctuaries of religion and of justice have been violated; the trembling nun has been dragged from the altar, and delivered to the fury of the populace; the magistrate has been forced from his bench, and executed,



cuted, uncondemned, before the doors of his tribunal; a princess celebrated for her charms and accomplishments, a prelate venerable for age and virtues, were pitilessly butchered in the general slaughter; and, as if to convince mankind that not even misery and poverty were secure, the servant has been murdered in his master's house, and the prisoner at the door of his cell.

Nor are these crimes and enormities excusable as the usual effects of popular tumult.—If it is the nature of a mob to transgress, it is the part of government to prevent or punish; yet so far from the slightest step being taken towards either the one or the other, an impunity has been all but promised in advance, and the perpetrators of crimes which merit the most exemplary fate, are, strange to tell! applauded in the very senate as worthy citizens, the saviours of their country, and assertors of the rights of man.

To fill up the measure of iniquity and punishment, there wants but an agrarian law : in such an unjust and impossible attempt, all the passions, in all their horrid forms, would be at once let loose on that devoted land ; in the resolution to keep, or the eagerness to acquire, the hand of each individual would be against every man, and every man's hand against his ; the nearest neighbours would then become the bitterest enemies, and the conquest of the kingdom by a foreign foe would be the only means to prevent its depopulation.

In such scenes, my fellow-countrymen ! for such I trust you all are, and that there are here no foreign emissaries sent to promote the interests of our enemies by disturbing our repose—in such scenes, I say, and such a prospect, is there any thing grateful or inviting, any thing to excite our envy, or stimulate our desires ? Yet such are the crimes,

crimes, and such the conduct you are called on to admire and imitate.—But of what have ye to complain? what is it ye would rid yourselves of? Is it of a Constitution stamped by the applause, the wonder of mankind? Is it of a Sovereign, who, with the will and the ability to be useful to the greatest, is incapable both in power and inclination of injuring the meanest of his subjects? Is it of a Nobility, who, collectively the guardians of your rights and laws, the barrier against cabal on the one hand, and prerogative on the other, are separately of no more consequence than is bestowed by an equal portion of untitled wealth and merit?—No, it can be none of these: the dreams of a visionary may indeed depict something more pure, more perfect than your present system; but, in estimating the profits of success, you are too wise not to calculate also the danger of experiment; already, from what you possess,

self, the freest, the happiest nation upon earth, you are too prudent to imitate the dog in the fable, and cast away the bone in pursuit of its shadow.

But you are saddled with heavy taxes ;— 'tis true. These taxes are not, however, levied to support the expences of the Court; those are confined to limits which the œconomy of the present reign has never been tempted to exceed ; they are but the interest of a public debt contracted in times of danger to supply the necessities of the state, without encroaching too suddenly and feverely on the comforts of its members; nor is it surely unreasonable that part of the charges of a war should be thus transferred to a posterity who reap in ease the harvest of their ancestors' toils, and share without hazard the glory of their victories. Yet this evil is but temporary : by the exertions of an able minister, the vast account is in a  
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train of liquidation; the influx of the valuable metals, by reducing the worth of specie, and of course diminishing the real magnitude of the debt, together with the rapid increase of our trade, conspire to second his patriotic efforts. Some taxes have been already removed, the rest will gradually follow: but, in order to accelerate our happiness, but not entirely to defeat these labours of human prudence, these dispositions of Providence in our favour, we should wait with patience the necessary term; and, instead of clogging, by seditious alarms, the wheels of government, instead of thus augmenting its expence, we should endeavour, by our industry, to multiply its resources.

With respect to that equality of goods for which some weak zealots are so blindly clamorous, the measure is at once impossible and ridiculous; for, what justice could divide to sloth and vice an equal portion  
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with industry and virtue? or, what time and sagacity could allot, in exactly equal shares, the various property of the realm? But, were it possible, were all the nation on a level to-day, they would cease to be so before to-morrow; ten thousand miserable wretches would before that time have alienated their little division to gratify some sordid appetite, nor would strength and courage and wisdom delay a single moment to acquire their wonted and necessary superiority over weakness and cowardice and folly. Nor is the wish less imprudent than absurd: the circulation of wealth in the body politic is, like that of blood in the natural, what gives life and vigour to the whole; in this the slightest skill in anatomy is sufficient to convince, that, were the vital fluid compelled perpetually to pass through those slender capillary tubes which are requisite to render its distribution general, it would soon be deprived

deprived of that energy which it owes but to the operation of the larger vessels, and, regularly slackening in its pace, produce at length, by a total stagnation, the dissolution of the frame. But such as are the larger arteries and veins, are the wealthier members of society. How, indeed, could a nation of paupers reward an ingenious improvement in the arts, or propagate an useful discovery? They could neither import, for their convenience, the commodities of distant climes, nor sell to advantage the manufactures of their own country. Would the mariner brave the hardships of the ocean, would the soldier incur the danger of the field, would even the mechanic undergo the sultry labours of the forge, to eat the bread which in equal plenty and perfection must fall to the lot of ease and idleness?—But why do I endeavour to evince by argument what may be illustrated by example? There  
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are not indeed, for the reasons already specified, any nations in absolute equality ; but there are many whom perverse philosophy has affected to consider in an enviable state of nature. In this numerous assembly there are some, perhaps, who know from experience the horrors of savage life, the blessings of civilization ; but all of you must have read, nor am I persuaded is there one that would barter the comforts of an English labourer, for the destitute independence of the Canadian, the Tartar, or the Hottentot.

But though, under any constitution, all cannot be rich and powerful, under this all at least have the chance of being so ; with us there is no monopoly of wealth, no exclusive privilege of greatness; our principal merchants, our judges, our bishops, our land and sea officers of foremost reputation, have been mostly the founders of their own fortunes ; nor can the real friend to merit  
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forbear exulting in the view of a primate (to his honour and to your conviction do I mention it) whose father was a petty tradesman, of a chancellor whose talents were destined to the loom.—Go, then, my friends and fellow-countrymen! waste not your time in slothful discontent and factious murmurings, but imitate their examples, and merit their success.

It remains for me, Mr. President, only to apologize for having so long taken up your time, and that of this respectable assembly; but zeal for the welfare and happiness of my country has led me to a greater length than was at first intended:—the patience, however, with which I have been heard, affords me the flattering hope that I have not exerted myself in vain; and, were I permitted to add one sentence more, it would be to request that you would listen with the caution that is due to those pretended apostles

ties of liberty, who light the flame but to pillage in the confusion—to those hireling orators who, for the smallest improvement in their pay, would bawl as vociferously for prerogative and obedience.

THE END.



